OKANOGAN FOCUS WATERSHED
SALMON CREEK

Annual Report 1999

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Okanogan Focus Watershed
Salmon Creek
BPA Project No. 9604200

FY 1999 Abstract

During FY1999 the Colville Tribes continued their partnership with the Okanogan Irrigation District (OID). In FY1998, during the first six months of their partnership, the two entities convened a joint committee made up of two anadromous fish biologists and a watershed coordinator representing the tribes, and the irrigation district manager and two of the OID's board of directors. The Joint Committee developed a scope of work to hire third party environmental and engineering consultants to conduct a feasibility study on Salmon Creek. The tribes and the OID agreed that their mission statement was to "study the feasibility of restoring and enhancing anadromous fish populations in Salmon Creek while maintaining the ability of the district to continue full water service delivery to its members". At the end of FY1998, the Joint Committee had recruited statements of qualifications from consultants and invited the top four firms to submit proposals to the Joint Committee and interview once the proposals were received.

Early in FY1999 the tribes competed successfully for matching funds for the consultant study from the Washington State Governor's Salmon Recovery Office ($92,000). BPA funded the remaining $100,000 of the study.

Early in FY1999 the Joint Committee interviewed the top four firms and agreed unanimously to hire the firm of Dames & Moore and its subcontractors. The consultants began work on February 1, 1999 and completed it on October 31, 1999. The consultants determined it was feasible to restore an anadromous fishery in Salmon Creek and continue water delivery service to the OID membership.

Since the consultants met once a month with the Joint Committee to report on their findings and discuss any changes that might be required in the scope of work, the Joint Committee was quite familiar with the contents of the report upon its delivery. Before the final report was delivered, the OID had decided that the report contained alternatives that they could support. Thus ten months into 1999, the Joint Committee hosted a luncheon and tour of Salmon Creek and the Okanogan Irrigation District for elected officials, agency representatives and the media. The tour's purpose was to describe how the partnership worked and how jointly the OID & CCT aimed to recover and restore an anadromous fishery in Salmon Creek and continue to provide water service to the irrigators. In addition, since the OID is a Bureau of Reclamation Project, a Section 7 Consultation (under Section 7 of the ESA) was initiated with representatives of NMFS, USF&W, WDF&W, WDOE, the BOR, and the Washington State Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (GSRO).

Also in FY1999 the Natural Resources Conservation Service conducted a stream assessment on Salmon Creek. Public involvement activities were also undertaken this year.

Okanogan Focus Watershed
Salmon Creek
BPA Project No. 9604200

FY 1999 Report

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I. Consultant Interviews

The Joint Committee invited four consulting firms out of the eight statements of qualifications received to tour Salmon Creek and the Okanogan Irrigation District, to submit proposals and to interview with the Joint Committee. On January 7th, 1999 the interviews were conducted. There was unanimous agreement to hire the firm of Dames & Moore.

During the tour with the top four consultants, we discussed our desire to conduct an Instream Flow Incremental Methodology (IFIM) for Salmon Creek. The consultants all stated that the funding was not adequate to conduct an IFIM. Instead, each consultant would include in their proposals how they planned to identify the instream flow requirements for fish using other methods. Simultaneously, the newly-formed Governor's Salmon Recovery Office had funding available for salmon recovery projects. The tribes requested and competed for $100,000 from the state to match the $100,000 from BPA that was earmarked for this study. The amount was reduced to $92,000, but enabled more detailed field work to be undertaken in identifying instream flow requirements for anadromous fish in each of their life stages.

II. Dames & Moore's Scope of Work

Dames & Moore's Scope of Work (attached) included five distinct areas of work and is summarized as follows:

1. Identify historic flows in the Salmon Creek watershed and identify historic fish populations (Parametrix)
2. Study the hydrological characteristics of the stream to determine its potential for restoration (lower 4.3 miles—Entrix)
3. Investigate water conservation opportunities for the OID (IRZ Agricultural Engineering)
4. Develop a computer model that integrates fish flow requirements with district system operations and water supply alternatives (Parametrix)
5. Investigate alternative water supply opportunities, including water exchanges, management, marketing and storage (Dames & Moore/IRZ).

The entire consulting team met with the Joint Committee once a month in Okanogan to discuss their findings, to determine if we were still on schedule and whether or not the findings affected the scope of work. In July a draft report was submitted to the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee individually reviewed the draft report, met as a committee to summarize their

comments and then reviewed the entire report with the consultant who had written it. The Joint Committee's comments were mostly related to errors, omissions, or wordsmithing. It is an unusual process for a team of consultants to interact so closely with their contractors, yet the Joint Committee is the better for it, as we have a thorough understanding of the work in it which will enable us to explain the findings to the public, elected officials, agency representatives, funding entities, etc.

III. Outcome of the Dames & Moore Joint Feasibility Study

Below is a synopsis of the consultants' findings based on each element of the scope of work.

1. Identify historic flows in the Salmon Creek watershed and identify historic fish populations (Parametrix)

   Data from the years 1904-1998 were used for the study. "Long-term historical average annual runoff in the upper watershed above Conconully Dam is 2l,700 acre-feet)30 cfs) with a minimum of 1,500 acre-feet (2 cfs) and maximum of 67,000 acre feet (93 cfs). Under normal conditions a bankfull discharge of about 340 cfs would be expected in about 70 percent of the years." (D&M Executive Summary, Page ES-2).

   "Anadromous fish species known to have historically occurred in Salmon Creek include spring chinook and summer steelhead. Spring Chinook are thought to be extirpated from Salmon Creek, although steelhead are occasionally observed in the creek during high water years."

   "Excessive erosion in the lower reaches of the stream has resulted in a large deposition of gravel and cobble sediment at the creek mouth. The resulting delta forms a barrier considerably higher than the Okanogan River water elevation throughout most of the year. In addition, most of the lower mile of Salmon Creek consists of relatively shallow and uniform riffle/run channel habitat, which provides little or no resting areas for migrating fish. Removal of accumulated delta gravels and sediments, together with modifications such as increasing the pool habitat in the lower reach would substantially improve fish passage conditions.

   The current water scheduling regime does not provide adequate flows during migration periods to ensure adequate passage through the lower reaches of Salmon Creek, except during high runoff years." The consultants investigated water supply alternatives for increasing lower reach flows including continuous, seasonal and pulsing flows. "A continuous flow management regime would provide water to the lower reach throughout the year. This regime would use the flexibility provided by t he upstream storage reservoirs to shape stream flows to simulate the shape of the natural hydrograph." (D&M Executive Summary, Page ES-7).

   The consultant determined the amount of stream flow necessary to provide fish passage for each life stage of summer steelhead and spring chinook, which ranged from 7,122 to 9,737 acre feet annually. (D&M Executive Summary, Figure ES-3).

2. Study the hydrological characteristics of the stream to determine its potential for restoration (lower 4.3 miles—Entrix)

"For more than 80 years, the lower 4.3 stream miles of Salmon Creek has been dewatered under normal irrigation operations, except during spring runoff events that result in uncontrolled spill at the reservoirs and diversion dam. The lack of streamflow below the diversion dam has historically precluded fish migration into lower Salmon Creek from the Okanogan River. Historical land uses on uplands have altered vegetation and sediment production. These changes, together with altered streamflow regimes and direct manipulation of streambanks and riparian vegetation, have adversely affected the channel geometry, streambank stability and riparian and aquatic habitat values of lower Salmon Creek.

As assessment of streamflow gains and losses within the 4.3 mile lower reach of Salmon Creek, between the OID diversion dam and the Okanogan River, was conducted in March 1999. Controlled releases were made over a 3-day period (13.6 cfs, 19.2 cfs and 26.8 cfs). A general trend of streamflow loss was observed between the diversion site and the mouth of Salmon Creek, although there was no clear relationship between the amount of stream flow loss and release rate. Streamflow losses may be considerably less under a regime in which more continuous releases recharge the groundwater table.

The lower reach of Salmon Creek below the OID diversion dam was divided into four study segments for passage and streamflow studies. Segments were delineated based on general differences in valley shape and topography, reflecting general geomorphic and hydrologic conditions. The valley gradient increases dramatically a little over a mile downstream of the diversion dam, and remains moderately steep into Okanogan.

The channel is in good condition and has relatively well-developed riparian vegetation cover above Danker Cutoff (stream mile 2.7), but this area has abnormally low sinuosity. Much of the Watercress Springs area (between stream miles 2.6 and 1.7) has good riparian zone vegetation, but is disturbed by public and private water resources infrastructure and has numerous small debris jams. The broader valley downstream of the springs lacks healthy riparian vegetation along the channel and on low floodplain terraces. Abandoned channel features can be seen on the low terraces now vegetated with upland species, with a narrow, active channel downcutting along a very straight alignment. Other areas downstream of the Springs have an overly wide and shallow channel, with various channel bar types and no streambank vegetation. In several locations the exposed bank heights approach or exceed ten feet. Within city boundaries, the channel has a slightly lower slope, but sinuosity is still very low. Residential encroachment on the channel during the periods between major floods and channel straightening have directly affected the channel and a few locations lack either vegetation or hardened bank protection, such as the area downstream of Mill Street bridge.

There are many important aspects of restoration planning aside from providing minimum streamflows for specific life history phases of fish. A modified channel shape could significantly increase the continuous width of the channel that meets passage criteria. It has often been observed that a relatively narrow but well-defined pathway through a difficult stream reach will consistently pass more fish than a large amount of discontinuous deep water scattered throughout the same reach. Thus it is the overall definition of the low-flow channel (increase in contiguous width meeting passage criteria) that will most improve fish passage through problem reaches. Restoration of minimum flows for fish passage, in the absence of measures to develop a more self-sustaining stable channel, is unlikely to provide for successful fish recovery.

Given the relatively steep slopes and parent material between the diversion dam and Watercress Springs, a low sinuosity, step-pool/boulder run channel with a relatively narrow corridor of pine and black cottonwood is a reasonable target future condition. Although such a condition could be developed within a ten-year time frame, constructed features would dominate channel conditions, and vegetation would be 20 to 50 years away from controlling channel stability. Salmon and steelhead population increases should be evident within 10 years because of the large amount of suitable habitat that exists above Watercress Springs. Fish production in the lowest parts of Salmon Creek is not expected to achieve its full potential until the riparian vegetation is capable of shading the stream and its channel is well-established.

3. Investigate water conservation opportunities for the OID (IRZ Agricultural Engineering)

   As compared to other irrigation districts in the region, the Okanogan Irrigation District achieves a relatively high efficiency. District-wide efficiency is remarkably consistent, averaging 86 percent efficiency since the rehabilitation of the system. This component of efficiency is driven primarily by operational spill into Duck Lake. On-farm efficiency varies much more widely and appears to be a function of water year type. In dry or water short years farmers apply water conservatively, and efficiencies exceeding 100 percent (i.e., deficit watering) are achieved. In wet years, water is more liberally applied and efficiencies drop as low as 66 percent. Over the period reviewed (1993-1998), on-farm efficiencies averaged 82 percent. Overall efficiency, considering district-wide and on-farm efficiencies, averaged 70 percent and ranged from 57 percent to 84 percent for the period. It was estimated that district-wide agricultural water savings could result in up to 593 acre-feet annually and that on farm water management could result in up to 1,153 acre-feet annually.

4. Develop a computer model that integrates fish flow requirements with district system operations and water supply alternatives (Parametrix)

   A water supply model was developed to simulated the current operations of the Salmon Creek and OID water supply systems and quantify how much additional water could be provided by each of the alternative water supply sources. This model used historical runoff data from the Salmon Creek watershed for the period 1904-1998 to simulate operations of Conconully and Salmon Lake reservoirs, the OID irrigation withdrawals from Salmon Creek, the water supply alternatives described below, and the resulting amount of instream flow in Salmon Creek.

5. Investigate alternative water supply opportunities, including water exchanges, management, marketing and storage (Dames & Moore/IRZ).

   The consultants summarized and compared the range of alternatives considered in this planning level study. In all, two dozen alternatives were investigated, of which 10 were considered potentially viable at a preliminary planning level. These include the following alternatives:

   - WATER CONSERVATION ALTERNATIVES
     - WC-1: District-wide Agricultural Water Conservation
     - WC-2: OID Totally Pressurized Water Delivery System

   - WATER EXCHANGE ALTERNATIVES

- WE-2: City of Okanogan Watercress Springs Water Exchange
- WE-3: Okanogan River Water Exchange

- WATER MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES
  - WMan-2: OID Diversion 5 Reregulation
  - WMan-3: On-Farm Water Management

- WATER MARKETING ALTERNATIVES
  - WMar-1: OID Member Irrigators Water Bank

- WATER RIGHTS ALTERNATIVES
  - (none)

- WATER STORAGE ALTERNATIVES
  - WS-1: Aquifer Storage and Recovery
  - WS-2: Brown Lake
  - WS-6: Raise Salmon Lake Dam and Replace Feeder Canal

IV. Begin Implementation Phase of Recommendations in the Dames & Moore Report

Table ES-7, titled Planning Level Cost & Yield of Viable Water Supply Alternatives (attached separately) identified the firm annual water yield of each alternative, the costs for construction and the capital cost required based on acre foot. The Joint Committee has agreed to continue its partnership and work on implementation of the following measures:

WC-1: District Wide Agricultural Water Savings
WE-3: Okanogan River Water Exchange (80 cfs pipeline)
Wman-2: OID Diversion 5 Re-regulating Reservoir
Wman-3: On-Farm Water Management
Wmar-1: OID Water Bank
WS-6: Raise Salmon Lake Dam/Replace Salmon Lake Feeder Canal

It is necessary to have the support of local elected officials, legislators, and agencies. The Joint Committee hosted a luncheon describing the partnership and the study and a field tour of the problem areas and opportunities for restoration on October 5, 1999. Eighty-five people turned out for this event. There was overwhelming support for the work conducted to date and promises to assist with implementation.

On October 4th, the Joint Committee hosted a dinner meeting with representatives of the Bureau of Reclamation, Wash. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Wash. Dept. of Ecology. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Wash. Governor's Salmon Recovery Office. The purpose of the meeting was to have the Dames and Moore Consultants explain their findings and the rationale behind the scope of work. It was also an opportunity for the agencies to personally question the consultants about the findings. A third reason for this meeting was to begin a Section 7 consultation between the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Marine Fisheries Service since the OID is a Bureau project. The OID has officially requested that they be included in all discussions under this consultation. Out of respect for the partnership, the agencies have agreed to permit the tribes to also be included in this consultation process.

Funding: The Joint Committee will approach several sources for funding implementation of measures describe above. Those sources include the newly created Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board, BPA/NWPPC, and Congress. Two of the measures, a new pump station on the Okanogan River and the raising of Salmon Lake Dam, will require congressional approval for their construction. Delegates of the Joint Committee have already followed up with Washington State Senators' offices to discuss congressional approval and appropriation of funding.

Washington State has created a new process whereby local governments can receive funding to be lead entities on Salmon Recovery. The Colville Tribes are co-lead entities with Okanogan County on Salmon Recovery in Okanogan County (Methow and Okanogan Basins). The Watershed Coordinator preparing this report is also the lead for the Tribes in the lead entity process. A technical committee will rank and prioritize projects for the County. Then a citizen committee will evaluate the technical committee's recommendation. The manager of the OID is a member of the citizen committee. Thus the Salmon Creek projects will receive fair representation in the Washington State salmon recovery prioritization process.

V. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Salmon Creek Stream Assessment

The Colville Tribes also partnered with the NRCS locally in Okanogan and their Spokane Office to conduct a stream assessment on Salmon Creek. The study took place from March through October, 1999. There were five objectives for this inventory and analysis:

1. Use good science to study and characterize Salmon Creek
2. Inventory and analyze stream stability and streambank erosion
3. Implement a stream classification system that would physically describe the current condition and tend of Salmon Creek
4. Complete a riparian inventory and condition analysis
5. Develop alternatives to address streambank erosion and bed instability that are mutually beneficial to landowners, fish habitat and the stream's natural physical (geomorphic) characteristics.

Inventory

The Salmon Creek inventory included eight reaches averaging 1.9 miles each. The inventory started at the confluence of Salmon Creek and the Okanogan River and ended at the outlet of the Conconully Reservoir at river mile 15. Reaches were delineated based on permanent structural reference points, changes in geologic valley types and major changes in stream conditions.

The stream team was allowed access of 11.2 miles of the stream corridor (74%). The access areas were covered by foot and characterized for stream type, riparian type and condition, streambank stability, and other features. Some areas within each reach were selected as representative sites for bank erosion classification, bedload sampling and riparian sampling.

Data, including geomorphic stream classification, valley types, cross-sections, regional bankfull curves, USGS gauge analysis, bedload analysis, streambank stability and erodeability were included as part of the inventory. Field procedures most closely

followed techniques described in Applied River Morphology (Rosgen 1996) and Stream Channel Reference Sites (USDA 1994).

Reach 1 (2.4 miles long) can be generally characterized as both vertically and laterally unstable. Most or Reach 1 is entrenched and incising, with streambank failures being common throughout. A high width-to-depth ratio with little floodplain to disburse energy is common.

Reach 2 starts at the bridge above watercress Springs and ends at the OID Diversion Dam and is 1.55 miles long. A significant geologic valley change occurs at the county road bridge above the springs. In Reach 2, the valley becomes wider, the stream gradients and types are less steep and the natural channel has more sinuosity. Streambanks have more fines with less cobble and gravel. The first mile has high bank height ratios with little root matrix in the banks for soil cohesion. The reach also has a reference site just below the OID diversion dam.

Reach 3 begins at the OID diversion and ends 2.55 miles upstream on Salmon Creek Road just upstream from the Harvil property line. Valley type is similar to valley type in reach 2.

Reach 4 begins just above Harvil's and ends at the next road crossing 1.62 miles upstream. Some of the most severe and actively eroding streambanks on the creek exist on Reach 4. Reach 4 also had the 2nd highest erosion rates of the six reach comparisons (803 tons).

Reach 5 is 1.85 miles in length. It begins at the Salmon Creek road crossing at the end of the McCormick ownership and ends at the road cross near Happy Hill Road. Aerial photography and views from the road indicate significant rates of erosion and property loss.

Reach 6 begins near Happy Hill Road and ends 1.2 miles upstream at the end of the Peterson Property line. The valley becomes narrower in this reach. Some facets have been entrenches as a result of past efforts towards stabilization. Considerable lengths are still connected to the floodplain. However, because of lack of vegetation and root cohesion in the streambank, toe failure is common.

Reach 7 is the Ruby Reach. It begins at the Peterson Property line and ends where the Salmon Creek Road crosses the stream for the last time. It is 1.2 miles long. Reach 7 has a steeper stream gradient with narrower valley walls than Reach 6. At the reference site location, the integration of woody debris and root matrix work together to protect the streambank and absorb energy while providing excellent fish habitat. It has bank height ratio of less than 1.1 with optimal protection. Streambank erosion rates are slight to none. Most of the riparian area in the Ruby Reach is function. Beavers are active and have had a significant impact on the stream's current state. Overall erosion rates are lowest of all reaches assessed.

Reach 8 is 2.52 miles long and ands at the Conconully Reservoir. The valley becomes narrower and the stream gradient increases at the beginning of Reach 8, is moderately steep, typically between 2-4%. The bed features are described as rapids. Reach 8 is referred to as the reference reach because it had the least amount of historical

development and most likely has portions of stream that would be identified as reference sites.

Geomorphic Conclusions

In general, most of the lower 15 miles are in a downward trend. Some reaches are in very poor condition, such as Reach 1. Treatments are recommended for Reaches 1,2, 3, 4, and 6. There are numerous opportunities to reduce streambank erosion and increase streambed stability between Reaches 1 and 6. The reduction of streambank erosion will have a positive affect on reducing the amounts of fines in the system.

Riparian Conclusions

Of the twelve plant communities sampled, eight were desirable as riparian habitat. Four were undesirable and in need of some type of treatment. Treatment of these areas range from a simple need to establish woody vegetation along the bank to complex problems associated with damaged or lowered water tables due to stream incision.

Alternatives and Effects

Alternative 1 is the present condition, which is geomorphically unstable. Streambank erosion and channel incision will continue. Fish barriers would not addressed. In areas where the stream is incised, a water table will not be present to sustain riparian plants for the purposes of streambank protection and shade.

Alternative 2 is the treatment level that would address minimal habitat concerns and would include some maintenance of unstable banks. This alternative does not include large portions of eroding bank; consequently, most the of the unstable banks would remain untreated and many of the wide and shallow stream areas would remain the same. This alternative addresses only properties that have imminent loss of valuable structures such as homes.

Alternative 3 is the recommended treatment. It addresses floodplain functionality, habitat, cover, streambank erosion and bed incision, shading, root cohesion, and bank protect.

Alternative 4 includes all of the structural and vegetation components of Alternative 3, with the addition of reintroducing the floodplain on Reach 6 and used a wide floodprone area for riparian development. Optimal conditions are desirable for the highest degree of long-term stability. (Above all cited from Salmon Creek Inventory & Analysis Report, USDA, NRCS, October 1999).

VI. Public Involvement

In 1999 four meetings were held for Salmon Creek landowners. Invitations were mailed personally to each of them at their mailing addresses. Two were held in March. The first March meeting was held to explain the two studies (Dames & Moore/NRCS) that the OID/CCT and NRCS were about to undertake. We explained that access to the stream would be needed and in some places that meant crossing private property. We provided in-depth details of the studies, how the information would be used and what the outcomes

would be. We then asked people to come back in two weeks to obtain their written permission. If they did not want to grant permission, we asked for that in writing as well. We promised that a summary of the information would be sent to them when the studies were completed, and that meetings would be held later in the year so that the consultants could present their findings.

Two meetings were held in the fall. On October 2lst, the Dames & Moore presented their scope of work and explained their findings. The OID manager and the OID attorney explained that they would be implementing measures identified in the D&M report. The OID asked the public for their support, and explained that the partnership with the tribes had turned out to be a fruitful one.

On November 4th a second meeting was held during which the NRCS presented their findings. The stream team leader, Barry Southerland, explained that stream stability would be good for people and for fish as well. By stabilizing the streambanks and the channel bed, it would go a long ways in addressing the severe erosion and property loss suffered by many of the landowners. We then explained that the next step, if granted permission by the landowners, would be to undertake actual design and engineering plans for the channel restoration, which would also entail access to private lands. We asked people to raise their hands if they were in favor of this, and 90% of the people in the room agreed! This included people who up until this time had been unfavorable towards this project. The Public Works Director for the City of Okanogan offered to write a letter in support from the City.

CONCLUSION:

The Tribes conclude that it makes sense from this point forward to separate the partnership with the OID, and it's subsequent capital projects, from the stream restoration work. The rationale for this is that stream restoration requires the support of landowners, the City of Okanogan, and elected officials. The Tribes wish to form a stream restoration oversight committee made up of some of these people. In addition, discussions need to take place with the NRCS about their capability in undertaking physical stream restoration and whether or not they can commit their staff. If the NRCS cannot commit their staff to all or part of it, the Tribes may ask the Wash. State Dept of Fish and Wildlife to take a leadership role in coordinating the restoration work as partners with the tribes, the landowners and the City. That will be the work of FY2000.